VIReC RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

Data Issues Brief	September 2005

1. Cyber Seminar on VA Medicare Data

The VIReC cyber seminar entitled "VA Medicare Datasets for Research" will be presented October 6, 2005, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. EST, as part of the Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) cyber seminar series. Information about registering for this and other cyber seminars, as well as the full schedule of upcoming sessions, is available on the HSR&D Web site at http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/.

2. Call for Abstracts for HSR&D National Meeting

The Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) has announced that its national meeting will be held in February 2006 and has issued a call for abstracts to be submitted by October 14, 2005. The Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP) will host the Washington, D.C. meeting, which will have as its theme "Implementing Equity: Making Research Work for Diverse Veteran Populations." Details about the meeting and call for abstracts are on the HSR&D Web site at http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/about/national_meeting/2006/default.cfm.

3. New on VIReC's Web Site

- *VIReC Research User Guide: FY2004 Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets* and *VIReC Research User Guide: FY2004 Medical SAS Outpatient Datasets*, available at (http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov/References/RUG/RUG.htm).
- Slides from VIReC's course, "Using VA Data for Research: Cancer as an Example," presented as part of the 7th Annual Seattle Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Clinical Research Methods Summer Session June 20-24, 2005. See http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov/References/SelectPresentations/SelectPresentations.htm.

4. June 2005 *Long Term Care Reference Guide and Codes* Issued

VHA's Office of Information (OI), in conjunction with the Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care, has issued a revision of the *Long Term Care Reference Guide and Codes*. The reference guide was created in 2001 to support VHA compliance with the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (Public Law 106-117). The guide specifies a variety of codes, such as Fee Basis Purpose of Visit Codes, clinic stop codes, treating specialty codes, etc., to be used for long term care (LTC) services. The guide also enumerates LTC services and the respective codes for programs such as community nursing homes, home based health care, VHA inpatient care, outpatient Fee Basis, and VHA outpatient care. The guide is available on the VA Intranet at http://vaww.vistau.med.va.gov/Enrollment/Documents/MB-LTC/Long%20Term%20Care%20Reference%20Guide%202005.pdf.

5. August-September Issue of *DSS Matters*

The VHA Decision Support Office has released the August-September 2005 issue of the *DSS Matters* newsletter. Of particular interest to researchers is the article on conversion of the DSS databases for FY2006, which describes new fields in the DSS production databases. The newsletter is available on the VHA Intranet at the DSS Web site, http://vaww.dss.med.va.gov/news/ne_newsletter.asp.

6. VHA Requires Entry of Data in Functional Status Outcomes Database

VHA Directive 2005-032, issued August 8, 2005, announced a policy that all VA medical centers must have connectivity to the Functional Status Outcomes Database (FSOD) for Rehabilitation at the AAC. Entitled "Physical Medicine And Rehabilitation Outcomes For Stroke, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), And Lower-Extremity Amputation Patients," the directive makes it a facility director's responsibility to ensure that FSOD is utilized to enter and track rehabilitation outcomes of all new stroke, lower-extremity amputation, and TBI patients. Full details, including a history of the VHA's use of FSOD is available on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1293. Information about research uses of the FSOD is in VHA Notice 2002-04, which is available on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1087.

7. VHA To Have Organizational Database

HSR&D's Center for Organization, Leadership, and Management Research (COLMR) is compiling a VHA organizational database. COLMR will supplement existing organizational data sources with an online survey of VISNs and medical centers that asks about structures and processes, such as major divisions, reporting relationships, quality improvement processes, and local and regional committees. Data collection is underway, and the database is expected to be available to researchers and others some time next year. Further information about the effort is in minutes of the VHA Conference Call of August 12, 2005, available on the VA Intranet at http://vaww1.va.gov/med/vha_conf_call/art_detail.cfm?id=248. A PDF version of the instrument being used to collect the data can be requested from COLMR by contacting Ms. Zoe Le Van at zoe.levan@med.va.gov.

8. VIReC Starts FY2006 With Five-Year Renewal

The Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) has approved VIReC's request for renewal and strategic plan for FY2006-FY2010. Database documentation efforts will continue with a new emphasis on a dynamic online metadata registry format. New initiatives will include data quality investigations and reports and expanded educational activities. VIReC also plans to participate in, monitor, and disseminate information about new VA informatics efforts, such as the re-engineering of the VA electronic health record system (CPRS), the Health Data Repository, and new data marts.

9. VIReC Plans Primary Web Site on VHA Intranet

VIReC currently maintains almost identical Internet and Intranet Web sites (at www.virec.research.med.va.gov and vaww.virec.research.med.va.gov, respectively) The Center is planning to make its primary Web presence on the VHA Intranet and to maintain a limited presence on the Internet. The change will make it easier to comply with Office of Communications requirements for Internet Web sites, and it will be possible for VIReC to provide researchers with information and hyperlinks to VA information sources that cannot be put on an Internet site. VA-affiliated researchers will be able to utilize the Intranet site from any computer within the VA firewall or by using the VA Virtual Private Network (VPN). The VIReC Help Desk will continue to be accessible through both the Internet and Intranet Web sites. VIReC expects that the change will be completed by the end of the calendar year. Researchers with questions and comments about this development are encouraged to contact VIReC at 708-202-2413 or VIReC@va.gov.